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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [KSEP](#) [MI](#) [IIP](#) [HIV](#) [AIDS](#)

SUBJECT: USING CULTURE TO COMBAT HIV/AIDS

¶1. Summary: Using a \$6,000 travel grant, Public Affairs invited Dr. Jack Allison to return to Malawi June 3 to participate in a three-week speaker program entitled "Using Music to Combat HIV/AIDS." Dr. Allison served as a PCV from 1966-68 and became famous in Malawi for using music to deliver health messages. His 1968 song "Ufa wa Mtedza" (Peanut Flour) talked about the importance of putting protein in childrens' diets, and remains one of the most popular Chichewa language songs ever recorded. Dr. Allison returned to Malawi in 1994 and, teaming up with local artists, composed and recorded seven HIV-themed songs, which still receive airplay. The purpose of this program was to have Dr. Alison work with community-based music groups to write songs that focus on current HIV/AIDS messages, primarily behavioral change. The program helping achieve the key mission goal of combating HIV and AIDS, the festival reinforced the cordial relationship already existing between the USG mission and its Malawi partners in the area of HIV and AIDS. End Summary.

¶2. Activity dates: June 3 - June 22

¶3. Result/Impact: Jack Allison's long history with Malawi, along with his ability to compose and perform songs on important health themes in Chichewa, makes him a unique goodwill ambassador here. The program was focused on three large rural centers, rather than Malawi's major cities, but media coverage was able to spread the message to a national audience. While this may seem to be "retail" public diplomacy, Dr. Allison's work with Peace Corps Volunteers, local HIV community groups and bands will continue to pay dividends long after the program is over.

¶4. Theme: Using Music to Combat HIV/AIDS

¶5. Activities: Dr Allison worked with local bands and communities in two lakeshore districts of Nkhata Bay and Mangochi which are the hardest hit by HIV/AIDS pandemic with HIV prevalence rate of over twenty percent. The music and drama groups addressed current HIV/AIDS themes, including preventing transmission, property grabbing from widows, de-stigmatization, keeping girls in school, as well as male behavior change and men's responsibility in stopping the pandemic.

¶6. In Nkhata Bay, Dr. Allison worked with the National Aids Commission (NAC), which funded Health Education Band and several local groups. The three-day program concluded with a performance in Nkhata Bay attended by traditional chiefs, members of the District Assembly, the District Aids Commissioner and the Principal Secretary for Sports Youth and Culture. A crowd of over 2,000 people attended the concert, which featured Dr. Allison and all the local musical and drama groups he worked with during the prior three days.

¶7. In Mangochi, Dr. Allison spent four days working with musical groups from Monkey Bay District and in the area surrounding Malawi Children's Village, concluding with another daylong performance. Public Affairs in collaboration with Malawi Children's Village (MCV) and Mangochi District Assembly organized a music festival, which attracted over 1500 people. The theme of the festival was "Using music to combat HIV/AIDS" at MCV in Mangochi. Dr. Allison, who was guest speaker, teamed up with local artists to disseminate HIV/AIDS messages through songs.

¶8. Dr. Allison also worked with Peace Corps Malawi. Together with the Peace Corps Mission Director and Public Affairs Officer, he attended a daylong program of HIV themed performances organized by a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nkande Village, Mchinji. Drama and musical groups from the surrounding area performed HIV-themed songs and skits along with Dr. Allison, who spoke to the audience in Chichewa on HIV issues and sang some of his own songs to an audience of nearly 500 villagers from the surrounding area. He also led a workshop for thirty-seven current Peace Corps Volunteers working in the areas of health, education, and environment in rural villages of Malawi entitled "Using the Arts in HIV/AIDS Education." The workshop helped current Volunteers explore ways of using music, puppetry, dance, murals, posters, drama, and other arts to reach over 20,000 Malawians in villages where they serve with the message of HIV/AIDS education.

19. Throughout Allison's visit, radio MBC played his music, especially the hit 'Ufa wa Mtedza' in musical programs and presenters kept saying Allison was back in the country. The "Daily Times" and "Chronicle" newspapers published articles covering Dr. Allison's tour.

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